

International Alliance of Waste Pickers Response to Chair's Text

1st December 2024

The International Alliance of Waste Pickers acknowledges the Chair's text from December 1, 2024, and appreciates the areas of progress so far. However, we express our concern regarding the weakening of the Just Transition article through the use of voluntary over mandatory language. We urge member states that have consistently supported waste pickers to stay vigilant and ensure that the just transition provisions for waste pickers in various articles are mandatory. Adopting mandatory language in the treaty and the suggested amendments below will positively impact the more than 40 million¹ waste pickers and their families worldwide.

Below are our recommendations, in order of importance, for strengthening the chair's text.

ARTICLE 10 - JUST TRANSITION

Revised text	Rationale
<p>1. In implementing this Convention, each Party should promote and shall facilitate a just transition, taking into account national circumstances and capabilities, including development priorities, needs, challenges and different pathways, with a view to ensuring that no one is left behind.</p>	<p>From the start of the negotiations, the majority of member states have strongly supported mandatory language in the Just Transition article, especially for Indigenous Peoples and waste pickers. Weakening the Just Transition article risks undermining the progress we have achieved in these negotiations. By using mandatory rather than voluntary measures, member states will ensure justice for the most vulnerable communities, including waste pickers, who have been and are vital to reducing plastic pollution.</p>
<p>2. In taking measures to implement paragraph 1 of this article, each Party should shall take into account the situation of and engage workers in the formal and informal sectors, including workers in the plastic industry, waste pickers, artisanal and</p>	<p>We also call for Paragraphs 2 and 3 to be mandatory obligations for Parties. It will not be possible to implement a just transition effectively if these two paragraphs remain voluntary.</p>

¹ Ed Cook, Nathalia Silva de Souza Lima Cano, Costas A. Velis. 2024. *Informal recycling sector contribution to plastic pollution mitigation: A systematic scoping review and quantitative analysis of prevalence and productivity*. Resources, Conservation and Recycling, Volume 206.

small-scale fishers, small and medium enterprises, as well as communities and groups disproportionately affected by such transition across the full life cycle of plastics, including Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and children.

3. Each Party ~~is encouraged to~~ **shall** report, monitor and evaluate measures taken to implement this Article in its national report pursuant to Article 15.

4. The Conference of the Parties shall adopt guidance to assist Parties in the implementation of this Article, taking into account relevant guidelines developed by international organizations, including the International Labour Organization.

We call for reinstating paragraph 6 of the Chair's 3rd Non Paper using mandatory language, including a reference to the International Labour Organization (ILO) and preferably the ILO's Just Transition Guidelines (2016). *This is particularly necessary following the removal of sub paragraphs a)-g) from the Compilation Text.*

PREAMBLE

Recognizing the significant contribution made by all workers in the plastics sector, especially **waste pickers and** those that are in informal and cooperative settings and small and medium-sized enterprises, to the collection, sorting and recycling of plastics in many countries, **and their right to a just transition**

We call for the inclusion of waste pickers in the preamble.

ARTICLE 11 - FINANCE, INCLUDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FINANCIAL MECHANISM

13. The Mechanism will also be utilised to support **a just transition and** relevant programming for populations most vulnerable to the adverse effects of plastic pollution.

Without a financial mechanism for a just transition, it will not materialise.

For our detailed recommendations on the finance mechanisms, **see our report.**

PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES

1. (g) Just and equitable transitions should respect nationally defined development priorities and ensure social and economic protections. This approach aims to mitigate impacts of such transitions, including on waste pickers and other workers in the plastics industry, including those in informal and cooperative settings, recognizing the diverse pathways needed to address plastic pollution and the differing financial, technical and technological burdens between developed and developing countries.

We prefer Option-1 for Principles and Approaches.

This addition recognises the need for a just transition for affected workers and communities whose livelihoods are likely to be affected by the measures proposed to reduce plastic pollution.

ARTICLE 8 - PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT

2. In implementing paragraph 1, each Party shall, taking into account national circumstances and capabilities, take measures, including to:

We welcome the mandatory language in the plastic waste management article and the inclusion of waste pickers in paragraph 2.f.

f. ~~Promote~~ Facilitate a just transition for plastic waste management workers, especially waste pickers and other informal workers, including women, youth and small and artisanal fishers; or

However, we call for the word "promote" to be replaced with "facilitate," as this would make implementing a just transition mandatory, which is essential to protecting waste pickers' livelihoods.

ARTICLE 9 - EXISTING PLASTIC POLLUTION

2. When implementing any activities under paragraph 1, each Party ~~should~~ shall:

The article must impose binding obligations on Parties in their implementation activities.

c. ~~promote~~ facilitate the engagement of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, waste pickers, civil society, scientists, and the private sector, as appropriate and foster the exchange of relevant technologies, experiences and lessons learned.

Further, we call for the use of "facilitate" over "promote" as it makes it mandatory for member states to engage the relevant stakeholders in combating existing plastic pollution. We further call for including waste pickers in the list of key stakeholders to facilitate engagement.

ARTICLE 2 - DEFINITIONS

g. Waste pickers: workers in informal, semi-formal, or cooperative settings involved in the collection, sorting, transporting, and commercialization of discarded materials for recycling or reuse.

We urge the inclusion of a clear definition for waste pickers in the forthcoming legal instrument to address plastic pollution, either in the definition section, annexure, or within any future guidelines developed under this legal framework.